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Legal marketing and lawyer advertising in Angola: ethical limits and regulatory challenges in the digital age

Marketing jurídico e publicidade na advocacia em Angola: limites éticos e desafios regulatórios na era digital

Marketing jurídico y publicidad en la abogacía en Angola: límites éticos y desafíos regulatorios en la era digital

Moniz Efraim Bernardo João Tunga – Faculdade de Economia, Universidade Kimpa Vita, Angola, Moniztunga12@gmail.com - ORCID: 0009-0004-1385-247X
Nsumbu Ngau – Faculdade de Direito - Universidade Kimpa Vita - ORCID iD: 0009-0006-4517-1075
Cristóvão Wilson Francisco Germias, MsC – Faculdade de Direito - Universidade Kimpa Vita - ORCID: 0009-0007-4769-3907

Abstract:
The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has deeply transformed the markets for professional services, including the legal sector (KOTLER; KELLER, 2016; KOTLER; KARTAJAYA; SETIAWAN, 2017). In this context, legal marketing emerges as a strategic tool for visibility and positioning, raising relevant ethical and regulatory challenges, especially in jurisdictions that adopt restrictive models regarding lawyer advertising (ABEL, 1989; BASTOS, 2018; ORDEM DOS ADVOGADOS DE ANGOLA, 2020). This study analyses the ethical limits of lawyer advertising in Angola, focusing on the tensions between traditional deontological principles and contemporary digital marketing practices (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021). The research adopts a qualitative, doctrinal legal approach, grounded on normative analysis and comparative perspective, with special reference to the experiences of Brazil and some European countries (ORDEM DOS ADVOGADOS DO BRASIL, 2021; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014; RHODE, 2015). The results show that the Angolan regime remains highly restrictive and poorly adapted to the digital reality, generating legal uncertainty for practitioners (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021). Nevertheless, the article concludes that it is possible to reconcile digital legal marketing with professional ethics, provided that it is framed by principles of sobriety, transparency, responsibility and the protection of professional secrecy, within a clearly defined regulatory model (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014).

Keywords:
legal marketing; lawyer advertising; professional ethics; Angola; digital transformation.

Resumo:
A rápida disseminação das tecnologias digitais de comunicação está reconfigurando o modo como funcionam os mercados de serviços profissionais e atingindo até a advocacia e o setor jurídico em geral (KOTLER; KELLER, 2016; KOTLER; KARTAJAYA; SETIAWAN, 2017). Sob este cenário, o Marketing Jurídico estuda-se consolidando enquanto estratégia de projeção e posicionamento institucional, mas também agrava dilemas éticos e regulatórios, sobretudo nos sistemas jurídicos com manutenção de normas rigorosas sobre publicidade na advocacia (ABEL, 1989; BASTOS, 2018; Ordem dos Advogados de Angola, 2020) Este artigo analisa os limites éticos para a publicidade advogada em Angola com foco nas tensões entre matrizes deontológicas tradicionais e as atuais práticas digitais de marketing (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021). A pesquisa se baseia em uma metodologia qualitativa, com cunho jurídico doutrinário, apoiado na análise de normas internas e nas comparações com experiências estrangeiras, sobretudo as do Brasil e algumas ordinações da Europa (ORDEM DOS

ADVOGADOS DO BRASIL, 2021; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014; RHODE, 2015). Estes achados sugerem a continuidade do modelo angolano bastante restritivo e mal adaptado às dinâmicas digitais, contribuindo para um cenário de insegurança jurídica entre os profissionais (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021). Por outro lado, defende-se que a coexistência harmônica entre o marketing jurídico digital e a norma ético-profissional do sigilo cliente-advogado não é utópica, contanto que as práticas comunicacionais sejam conduzidas segundo os postulados da discrição, da transparência, da responsabilidade e da salvaguarda do segredo de confidência profissional em âmbito de uma clara estrutura legal normativa (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014).

Palavras-chave:
marketing jurídico; publicidade de advogados; ética profissional; Angola; transformação digital

Resumen:
La rápida expansión de las tecnologías digitales de comunicación ha transformado profundamente los mercados de servicios profesionales, incluido el sector jurídico (KOTLER; KELLER, 2016; KOTLER; KARTAJAYA; SETIAWAN, 2017). En este contexto, el marketing jurídico surge como una herramienta estratégica de visibilidad y posicionamiento, planteando relevantes desafíos éticos y regulatorios, especialmente en jurisdicciones que adoptan modelos restrictivos respecto de la publicidad de abogados (ABEL, 1989; BASTOS, 2018; ORDEM DOS ADVOGADOS DE ANGOLA, 2020). Este estudio analiza los límites éticos de la publicidad de abogados en Angola, centrándose en las tensiones entre los principios deontológicos tradicionales y las prácticas contemporáneas de marketing digital (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021). La investigación adopta un enfoque jurídico cualitativo y doctrinal, basado en el análisis normativo y en una perspectiva comparada, con especial referencia a las experiencias de Brasil y de algunos países europeos (ORDEM DOS ADVOGADOS DO BRASIL, 2021; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014; RHODE, 2015). Los resultados muestran que el régimen angoleño sigue siendo altamente restrictivo y poco adaptado a la realidad digital, generando inseguridad jurídica para los profesionales (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021). No obstante, el artículo concluye que es posible conciliar el marketing jurídico digital con la ética profesional, siempre que esté enmarcado por principios de sobriedad, transparencia, responsabilidad y protección del secreto profesional, dentro de un modelo regulatorio claramente definido (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014).

Palabras clave:
marketing jurídico; publicidad de abogados; ética profesional; Angola; transformación digital.

Introduction

This radical transformation in how professionals present themselves to reach their target audience and how they establish spontaneous interaction with clients is also altering the processes of searching for, evaluating, and contracting services (KOTLER; KELLER 2016 and KOTLER; KARTAJAYA; SETIAWAN 2017). This evolution in the legal field presents considerable obstacles to traditional ethical parameters that restrict advertising, media actions,

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and client acquisition created for a pre -digital environment (BASTOS, 2018; ANGOLAN LAWYERS' ORDER, 2020).

In jurisdictions with more liberalized structures, legal marketing is widely recognized, albeit within specific ethical limits; conversely, in systems based on a robust deontological tradition, its acceptance remains a matter of contention (ABEL, 1989; RHODE, 2015). Angola serves as a prime illustration of this dichotomy: on the one hand, a rigorous regulatory environment governing legal advertising; on the other, a growing demand for visibility in an increasingly competitive digital environment (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021).

This article is based on the following investigation: is there a fundamental incompatibility between digital legal marketing and the restrictive ethical framework of Angolan law? The main question is articulated as follows: to what extent can digital legal marketing align with legal ethics in Angola without compromising the dignity, independence, and social function of the legal profession (BASTOS, 2018; ANGOLAN BAR ASSOCIATION, 2020; RHODE, 2015)?

The specific objectives of this study are: (i) to examine the Angolan legal and ethical framework regarding advertising in the legal profession; (ii) to outline the main applicable ethical restrictions; (iii) to assess the challenges introduced by digital platforms and modern marketing strategies; and (iv) to propose guidelines for a regulatory model suitable for the digital age (CHIVANJA,

Literature review

Literature on legal marketing indicates an evolution from a predominantly promotional logic to a more strategic model of communication, positioning, and relationship with the market (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023). Based on general marketing theory, Kotler and Keller (2016) and Kotler, Kartajaya , and Setiawan (2017) highlight the importance of understanding the expectations, needs, and behaviors of -target audiences, recognizing the role of digital platforms and social networks in building professional brands.

In the legal field, some scholars distinguish two main approaches to the topic: a market-oriented approach, focused on competitiveness and differentiation among legal services; and a professional perspective , which emphasizes the public function of advocacy, the protection of client interests, and the integrity of the justice system (ABEL, 1989; BASTOS, 2018; RHODE, 2015). Recent studies highlight the impact of digital platforms—search engines, social networks, institutional websites, video content, and podcasts—and the consequent need for

regulatory adaptation, including through specific provisions on advertising in the legal profession, as is the case in Brazil with Provision No. 205/2021 of the Federal Council of the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB) (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; ORDEM DOS ADVOGADOS DO BRASIL, 2021).

In parallel, the literature on professional ethics and deontology of the legal profession emphasizes that the independence, confidentiality, and dignity of the profession constitute structural limits to the commodification of legal services (BASTOS, 2018; ANGOLAN BAR ASSOCIATION, 2020; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014). The tension between market visibility and public responsibility is, therefore, a central axis for understanding current debates on legal marketing, especially in legal systems that, like the Angolan one, maintain a restrictive framework (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021).

Research gap

The literature review reveals, on the one hand, a growing number of studies on legal marketing and advertising in the legal profession in contexts such as the United States, Europe, and Brazil and, on the other hand, a scarcity of analyses situated in African realities, particularly in the Angolan context (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; RHODE, 2015). -Furthermore, there is an almost total absence of works that systematically address the interaction between: (i) strongly restrictive regulatory models; and (ii) the increasing diffusion of digital marketing practices on social networks and search engines (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021).

The digital dimension is often addressed, at best, as an accessory element, without an in-depth examination of its normative and deontological implications (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023). This article seeks to contribute to filling these gaps by: (i) situating the Angolan case within a broader debate on legal marketing; and (ii) proposing a regulatory model adjusted to the specificity of a restrictive ethical system, but subject to the same global technological pressure (ANGOLA BAR ASSOCIATION, 2020; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014).

Methodology

The investigation adopts a qualitative approach, of a legal- -doctrinal nature (BASTOS, 2018; RHODE, 2015). The main method is legal hermeneutics, applied to the interpretation of the Statute of the Angolan Bar Association (EOAA), the Code of Ethics and Professional

Conduct (CEDP), and the OAA's Instruction on Advertising, with a view to the systematic reconstruction of the regime applicable to advertising in the legal profession (ANGOLA BAR ASSOCIATION, 2020; CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021).

Additionally, -comparative analysis is used, with emphasis on the experiences of Brazil and some European countries, particularly regarding the gradual regulatory flexibility and the introduction of specific rules on digital legal marketing, such as Provision No. 205/2021 of the Federal Council of the Brazilian Bar Association (ORDER OF ATTORNEYS OF BRAZIL, 2021; MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023). The review of specialized scientific literature on legal marketing, professional ethics, and advertising regulation constitutes the third methodological axis (ABEL, 1989; RHODE, 2015; MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023).

This is -therefore an essentially interpretative, critical and exploratory approach, which does not involve the collection of empirical data, but seeks to offer theoretical and normative bases for future empirical investigations (RHODE, 2015).

Regulatory framework in Angola

The Angolan legal system is based on a clearly restrictive model, which only allows informative advertising under strict conditions (ANGOLA BAR ASSOCIATION, 2020; CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021). The Angolan Bar Association Statute (EOAA), the Code of Ethics for Lawyers and Professional Conduct (CEDP), and the Angolan Bar Association's Advertising Guidelines establish a set of structuring principles, among which the following stand out: prohibition of commercial promotion of legal activity; prohibition of client solicitation; restriction on the use of language and visual resources typically associated with advertising; and prohibition of the presentation of specific cases and the identification of clients for promotional purposes (ANGOLA BAR ASSOCIATION, 2020; CHIVANJA, 2022).

The stated objective of this model is to preserve the dignity of the legal profession, professional independence, and public confidence in the social function of lawyers, preventing the profession from being perceived as a purely commercial activity (BASTOS, 2018; CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021).

Ethical limits of advertising in the legal profession.

The ethical limits of advertising in Angolan law practice can be summarized in five axes: (i) non-commercialization of the profession; (ii) non-solicitation of clients; (iii) non-

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professional comparison; (iv) strict protection of confidentiality; and (v) strictly informative communication (ORDER OF LAWYERS OF ANGOLA, 2020; CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021).

The principle of non-commercialization prevents lawyers from using typical commercial advertising strategies, such as catchy slogans, promotional offers, or "discount" campaigns, which trivialize the provision of legal services (BASTOS, 2018; CHIVANJA, 2022). The principle of non-solicitation of clients prohibits active conduct aimed at attracting clients in an aggressive or unfair manner, whether carried out in person or through digital means (ORDER OF LAWYERS OF ANGOLA, 2020; CHIVANJA, 2022).

The prohibition of professional comparison prevents lawyers from presenting themselves as “better,” “more efficient,” or “faster” than colleagues, or from demeaning the reputation of other professionals for self-promotion (JORGE, 2021; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014). The protection of confidentiality, in turn, prevents the use of specific cases and client identities as marketing tools, even with alleged consent (ORDER OF LAWYERS OF ANGOLA, 2020; CHIVANJA, 2022).

Finally, the only permissible informational communication should be limited -to indicating objective data, such as name, registration number, areas of activity, address and contacts , presenting -them with sobriety and truthfulness (ORDER OF LAWYERS OF ANGOLA, 2020; CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021).

Challenges of the digital age

The emergence of digital platforms introduces specific challenges to the application of this restrictive regime (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; RHODE, 2015). First, it becomes -more difficult to distinguish, in practice, between mere information and advertising, especially in environments such as social networks, search engines and institutional websites, where the logic of visibility is intrinsic to the technology itself (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023).

Secondly, the algorithmic influence of platforms —that is, the way content is prioritized, segmented, and recommended—creates incentives for producing more appealing messages and using formats that maximize engagement, which may clash with the sobriety required by professional ethics (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014). Thirdly, the pressure for digital visibility, in highly competitive contexts, leads many professionals to resort to tools such as targeted ads, sponsored campaigns, or search engine optimization, practices that, if directly transposed to the legal profession, may

violate ethical standards (BRAZILIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, 2021; SILVA, 2023; CHIVANJA, 2022).

Results

The normative and comparative analysis carried out allows us to identify four main results: (i) the Angolan model of advertising in the legal profession is highly restrictive and was designed for a pre- -digital context; (ii) there is a significant regulatory gap regarding the performance of lawyers on digital platforms and the use of online legal marketing tools; (iii) this gap generates legal uncertainty for professionals; and (iv) foreign experiences demonstrate that some legal systems have adopted models of regulated flexibility, admitting digital legal marketing under clear ethical parameters (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021; MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; BRAZILIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, 2021; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014).

Discussion

The results suggest that the Angolan model is anchored in a traditional view of the legal profession, in which any approach to marketing strategies is perceived as a threat to professional dignity and independence (BASTOS, 2018; ANGOLAN BAR ASSOCIATION, 2020). Although this stance is historically understandable, it proves -limited in the face of contemporary digital reality, where the absence of an online presence can hinder citizens' access to legal information and legal services (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; RHODE, 2015).

The absence of specific regulation for the digital environment does not prevent the practice of legal marketing; on the contrary, it tends to displace -it to informal and less transparent areas, where ethical oversight is more difficult and the likelihood of abuse is greater (SILVA, 2023; MENDES, 2025). Comparative evidence indicates that models that combine clear deontological restrictions with positive guidelines on good digital practices produce more balanced results than regimes based solely on generic prohibitions (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; BRAZILIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, 2021; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014).

Proposed model

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Based on the analysis carried out, -a regulatory model for digital legal marketing in Angola is proposed, based on the following pillars: predominantly educational and informative content, avoiding direct appeals to hire; transparency and clear identification of the professional; sober communication, in moderate language and with graphic design compatible with the dignity of the profession; absolute respect for professional secrecy and the protection of personal data; and internal compliance and content supervision mechanisms (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021; MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014).

This model does not imply the unrestricted liberalization of advertising in the legal profession, but a gradual and controlled adaptation to the demands of the digital age, while preserving the ethical foundations of the profession (ORDER OF LAWYERS OF ANGOLA, 2020; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014).

Conclusion

Legal marketing in Angola is -at a turning point, pressured by digital transformation and limited by an ethical-deontological regime designed for a predominantly analog reality (CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021). The expansion of digital platforms, social networks, and targeted advertising mechanisms makes the inadequacy of regulatory models based solely on generic prohibitions increasingly evident, while simultaneously exposing the profession to risks of commodification, trivialization of the lawyer's public function, and violation of professional secrecy (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014).

In this context, the central challenge is not simply to prohibit or permit advertising, but to build a regulatory model capable of precisely distinguishing between legitimate informative communication, ethically oriented content marketing, and practices that are effectively incompatible with the dignity of the legal profession (ANGOLA BAR ASSOCIATION, 2020; BRAZILIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, 2021). Such a model must be based on criteria of balance and ethical rigor, combining the reaffirmation of structuring principles—such as non-solicitation of clients, non-commercialization of the profession, protection of confidentiality, and respect for institutions—with the recognition that digital communication can play a relevant role in promoting access to legal information (INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014; RHODE, 2015).

In the Angolan context, this implies the need for a regulatory update of the advertising regime in the legal profession, as well as the development of specific interpretative guidelines on operating in digital environments, prepared by the Angolan Bar Association in dialogue with academia and the profession itself (ANGOLAN BAR ASSOCIATION, 2020; CHIVANJA, 2022; JORGE, 2021). It also implies investing in continuous training in ethics and digital communication, in order to empower professionals to use technological tools with sobriety, transparency, and responsibility, for the benefit of citizens, the legal profession, and the justice system as a whole (MENDES, 2025; SILVA, 2023; INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2014).

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